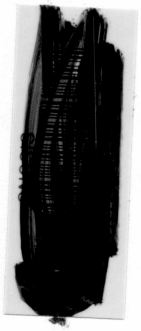

WOMEN, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY

IN KATE CHOPIN'S *THE AWAKENING* AND ASSIA DJEBAR'S *OMBRE SULTANE*

By

Shayle M. Hutchison

RECOMMENDED:

Richard S Carr

Renée Crawford

Lillian Corte

Advisory Committee Chair

Lori Hager

Department Head

APPROVED:

Morrison

Dean, College of Liberal Arts

Dean of the Graduate School

7-20-00

Date

WOMEN, CULTURE, AND IDENTITY IN KATE CHOPIN'S *THE AWAKENING* AND ASSIA DJEBAR'S *OMBRE SULTANE*

A

THESIS

Presented to the Faculty

Of the University of Alaska Fairbanks

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

For the Degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

By

Shayle M. Hutchison, B.A.

Fairbanks, Alaska

December 2000

Abstract

Beginning with the assumption that women of all cultures experience a conflict between their culturally prescribed gender roles and their individual sexual desires, I compare the characters Edna Pontellier of Kate Chopin's *The Awakening* with Isma and Hajila of Assia Djebar's *Ombre Sultane*. Each woman undergoes a process of awakening body consciousness that leads to her first experience of desire, an essential link between physical and mental consciousness. The expression of female desire conflicts with prescribed cultural behavior. Each character also moves away from her family and cultural roots, thus assuring herself a necessary distance for rebellion against social standards. However, of all three women, only Isma from *Ombre Sultane is* able to return to her community, successfully resolving the conflict between gender and individual desire.

Table of Contents

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

For her guidance, help, and unfailing support, I am deeply indebted to Lillian Corti, without whom this project would not have been completed. I would also like to thank Richard Carr and Renee Manfredi for patiently reading through piles of paper and for offering their advice and support. Finally, I am grateful for the encouragement of Erica Keiko Iseri, Kristine Dassinger, David Houston Wood, and the long phone calls from Jennifer Murphy.

Introduction

Every culture involves the institutional oppression of women. The feminist movement, in conjunction with other civil rights movements, has taught us that the oppression of women is never acceptable. Yet a Western feminist commenting on the oppression of Arab women is liable to the criticism that she is trying to liberate women by turning them against their own culture, thus engaging in an oppressive strategy analogous to the one she is criticizing. This objection assumes that oppression in the Arab world would not exist if it had not been invented by the West, which denies affinity between patriarchal structures in divergent societies. This denial implies female intellectual inferiority, that women are not capable of producing an insightful and penetrating critique of their own society. However, it is also certainly essential that feminists remain culturally sensitive. The large numbers of novels by Arab women writers recently imported to the West challenges feminists in this regard. This raises the question, is it necessary for individual women to entirely reject their cultural heritage in order to achieve a strong sense of self? To explore this

question, I will examine the female characters from *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin and *Ombre Sultane (A Sister to Scheherazade* in English) by Assia Djebar.

Feminism is a highly controversial issue in the Arab world, because as a movement with Western origins it is linked to a colonial past. Suha Sabbagh, former director of the Institute of Arab Studies in Washington, D.C., argues that Arab stereotypes and a misinformed Western public interfere with Arab feminist movements. According to Sabbagh, Arab women are viewed in the West as "victims of Islamic tradition, presented as an unmitigated fountain of oppression against women. This analysis suffers from the naivete of perceiving another culture through the prism of Western consciousness" (xiii). Arab women are therefore lost as individuals under the gaze of a culturally arrogant West. Algerian sociologist Marnia Lazreg equates the experience of Arab feminists with the black feminist movement in the United States: "a 'Muslim woman, is no longer a concrete individual. She is not Algerian, or Yemeni; she is an abstraction in the same way as a 'woman of color' is" (340). In both cases, categories of race and religion construct an "Other," and assume the primacy of white Western women's experiences.

According to literary critic Susan Lanser, the feminist movement has traditionally "tended to claim as universal what is in fact particular" (283). The Islamic tradition of veiling is a prime example of this fallacy. Frantz Fanon, the first critic to

discuss the colonial implications of veiling, argues that greater insistence on the wearing of veils coincides with the colonial conquest of Algeria. Unveiling meant alliance with the French conquerors; veiling meant patriotic alliance with traditional Algerian culture, yet it also meant acceptance of greater restrictions on women. The debate over Islamic dress codes continues today. Sabbagh notes that veils and the hijab are used in many different forms and for various reasons, sometimes as a representation of oppression, sometimes as a form of protest against the West. Therefore, "To see the hijab, in such cases, only as a sign of oppression of women, is to miss the point" (Sabbagh xxiv). According to Sabbagh, Western discussion of the veil unjustly places women at the center of International and foreign policy debates.

This debate over women, as opposed to with women unfortunately overshadows the real progress made by Arab feminists. As prominent Egyptian feminist Evelyne Accad writes,

> Engagement is often mixed with a sense of nationalism and identity, because the countries from which the women write are often struggling against foreign domination or towards national identity. Then comes disillusionment with the realization that political movements use women, instead of working for their liberation (96).

The cultural debates over women, of which veiling is one example, deflect attention from oppressive and violent acts committed against women. Sabbagh summarizes, "Arab women who seek greater rights are incorrectly accused of having internalized Western perceptions of the Arab world" (xxii). This conflict forces women to choose between their culture and their individual rights.

I conceive of culture as a tangible, influential reality that affects people on both a social and individual level. Jonathon Shay, in his study of Vietnam war veterans, attempts to define culture and its impact on human life: "Culture is not an illusory, movie-theater projection of bodily 'drives' or 'instincts,'. . Culture is as biologically real for humans as the body. Unless in a coma, we are always both culture bearers and bodies at every moment" (208). Though Shay's findings derive from studies of men, they are equally relevant to the experience of women traumatized by patriarchal abuse. To ask that a woman be either an emblem of her culture or an individual body creates a seemingly impassable rift within the individual self.

Somehow a balance must be struck. In the interest of exploring resolutions to this conflict, I will examine Chopin's Edna Pontellier and Djebar's Isma and Hajila. Each character undergoes a process of awakening body consciousness that leads to her first experience of desire. As a significant connection between physical and mental consciousness, desire proves to be

the essential element in each woman's ability to achieve an individual sense of self. Yet, active female desire conflicts with many traditional cultures, Algerian and American included. After her initiation into desire, each woman moves away from her family and her cultural roots, allowing her the distance she needs in order to develop as an individual. Of the three female characters I discuss, only Isma is able to return home, able to find a place in her community while retaining her strong sense of self.

In Chapter One, I discuss Edna Pontellier of *The Awakening* as an example of a woman who achieves a strong sense of self while losing her place in her community. I argue that Edna's suicide is not so much a failure on her part as a failure on the part of society to accept and support an independent woman such as Edna. Edna finds her society radically opposed to her needs and desires, and chooses her individual rights even at the cost of social acceptance, physical comfort, and life itself.

Chapter Two introduces Isma from Djebar's novel, Ombre *Sultane*. Isma represents the most successful of the characters I examine in terms of achieving independence and integrating herself back into the community. Isma rebels against her father and elopes with her lover. Her years subsequently spent in Paris allow her the distance and perspective to discover herself as a sensual being, and to question the patriarchal rule of her father as well as the strict religious and political laws she lives

under. Isma's story begins where Edna's ends. She moves beyond the attainment of body consciousness to a recovered connection with her family and community. In her ability to embrace her cultural roots without losing her sense of self, Isma emerges as the most successful of the three characters discussed in this work.

Of all three women, Hajila is the most difficult to write about because we know the least about her. On a certain level, Hajila seems to be a vision of the cloistered Muslim women of the past. We see her veiled, isolated, and imprisoned within the walls of an apartment she does not want. Within the context of *Ombre Sultane,* Hajila's story differs dramatically from that of the other two women, primarily because her sexual experience originates with rape, not desire. Yet she still works toward the same self-individuation that the other two characters do. Because of the rape scene and other traumatic events she suffers, Hajila's experience lends itself to clinical speculation, especially in terms of the psychology of abuse.

While the comparison of these two novels may at first seem unlikely, separated as they are by time and place, the two stories actually share a number of thematic affinities, even aside from the theme of self-individuation. For instance, variations on the idea of awakening recur in both books. Chopin describes Edna's dawning awareness of societal restrictions imposed on her as an awakening, and she uses sleeping and

drowsiness to indicate changes in Edna's psychological state. Likewise, Djebar describes Isma in Paris as often drowsy or deep in sleep. Even the title, with its reference to the heroine of *The Arabian Nights* whose life depends on her daily awakening before dawn, recalls Chopin's insistence on themes of sleeping and waking and constitutes a curious similarity between the two works. The sea and learning to swim catalyzes Edna's process of self-discovery in *The Awakening,* while in *Ombre Sultane* the public bath house is a significant location of renewal, solidarity, and discovery for the female characters. In each instance, water is described in sensual and hypnotic terms, and is invested with significant import to the characters' lives.

However, the most significant similarity between the two novels is the affinity between patriarchal structures that characters in both works struggle against. Although not living in an Islamic society, Edna Pontellier in *The Awakening* still finds herself imprisoned by her culture. Chopin represents religion, both Catholicism and Protestantism, as an oppressive force in her novel. Chopin also describes the traditional family structure as rigid and imprisoning. Because of the affinities between the two patriarchal structures, each of the female characters undergoes a similar process of self-actualization.[1]

---

[1] Throughout this thesis, I use the term "self-actualization" and "strong, individual selfhood" in the strictest Rogerian sense. Psychiatrist Carl Rogers identifies an "actualizing tendency" that every being strives for, a yearning for fulfillment beyond the necessitites of basic survival.

However, I do not want to suggest that the contemporary Algerian society Djebar depicts in her fiction is comparable to the nineteenth century American setting of *The Awakening*. Such a claim would justify the accusation of cultural arrogance that Arab feminists warn against. Also, I wish to emphasize that the similarities between the two novels result from affinity, not influence or imitation. Instead, by using such a prominent text as *The Awakening*, I wish to show that current North African/Arab literature, particularly those works written by women, are emerging as an influential body of literature worthy of scholarly attention. Writers such as Hanan al-Shaykh, Nawal El Saadawi, Ghada Samman, Daisy Al-Amir, Tahereh Saffarzadeh, and of course, Assia Djebar, are producing significant novels of essential literary and sociological value.

Some literary critics attack the work of Arab women writers as being too specific, of not accurately representing universal experience. For instance, African critic Femi Ojo-Ade writes, "In certain cases, personal tragedy become obsessive and obstructive, has continued to color the writer's opinion" (21). His attempt to reduce the literary effort of women novelists to the mere cataloguing of personal experiences ignores the real literary importance of authors like Assia Djebar. That so many novels by Muslim/Arab women today deal with themes of violence and desire, imprisonment and empowerment, suggests the experience depicted by these authors actually does have a certain universal

value. Furthermore, Ojo-Ade proceeds from the misogynist assumption that while men's interests and experiences are universal, what is interesting to women is trivial. Ojo-Ade also takes women to task

for not representing the lower class: "The challenge to women writers is to look at African woman at other levels than the established or aspiring middle class; to view the plight of the peasant woman. . ." (22). Aside from the problem inherent in dictating what any author should or should not include in their work, Ojo-Ade does not acknowledge Djebar's representation of Hajila in *Ombre Sultane*, an impoverished girl trapped in a loveless marriage to a rich man, not to mention the novels of Buchi Emecheta, Nawal El Saadawi, and Bessie Head, among others, who deal with lower class and poor women.

Both Chopin and Djebar transcend particularities of time and place in their work. The similarities between the two novels suggest that the experiences of Edna Pontellier, Isma, and Hajila are not unique. The task of the feminist critic, then, is to appreciate cultural differences while clarifying structures of patriarchy which continue to oppress women of all cultures.

Chapter 1: Edna Pontellier

Kate Chopin's apt metaphor for Edna Pontellier's awakening into selfhood is a continuous process of nothing transforming into something. The 'something' that Edna ultimately discovers within reveals a physical and spiritual consciousness that transcends the claims of family, religion, and society, even beyond the need to rebel. The conflict between culture and sex thus finally does not even exist for Edna. Since the rediscovery of *The Awakening* in the 1960's and its introduction into the mainstream literary arena, readers and critics have ardently debated the perceived success or failure of Edna and the meaning of Chopin's ambiguous ending to the novel. This on-going debate has the unfortunate effect of shifting the burden of gender oppression from the culture in which it originates onto Edna herself. Edna in fact exists at the end of the novel as a sensual, intelligent, autonomous being who acknowledges and knows her own desires, and who acts as an independent agent capable of asserting her will. With her art and as a mother she proves herself able to contribute to society, and in her move to the pigeon house she shows herself capable of being a self-provider. It is not Edna who fails society; it is society that fails Edna.

Although Nancy Armstrong chose to focus on British novelists in *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel,* her argument is relevant to Chopin's fiction as well. Armstrong's thesis, that the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries' domestic fiction written by women novelists represents an individual, psychological and economic reality as well as a form of political protest, sets the foundation for the modern novel. Indeed, Armstrong proclaims that as a result of such writers as the Bronte sisters and Jane Austen, the modern individual is "first and foremost" a woman (8). Armstrong uses the Brontes' and Austen's novels as examples of female desire channeled into the socially acceptable forms of marriage. However, in these novels, women's control of the domestic sphere translates into a political act. Chopin wrote *The Awakening* on the cusp of a new century, and Edna's story of desire, sexuality and selfhood seems to be the logical conclusion to Armstrong's theory of domestic fiction.

Throughout her book, Armstrong liberally applies the term "modern" to a variety of literary forms and particular works. She defines modern literature in terms of the discourse of desire and sexuality. Armstrong identifies the conflict between social conventions and individual desire as the genesis for modern literature (193). The desire depicted in domestic fiction is also particularly modern in that it posits men as "products of desire," as well as "producers of domestic life" (3). The result

of these narratives of desiring individuals is that domestic fiction "seized the authority to say what was female," and as such can be seen as a cultural event and even as a political act(5). *The Awakening* not only frames a conflict between one individual's desire and a rigid set of social conventions, but it also boldly takes the further step of allowing Edna's desire to triumph over culture and society. Chopin not only describes men as objects of desire, she also articulates Edna as an active producer of desire.

Desire connotes more than one's sexual wants. There is something immensely powerful in the act of desire itself. To speak the words "I desire" is to actively assert one's will upon another. Cultural critics such as Frantz Fanon commonly view desire as a statement of individual assertion . More recently, Homi Bhabha theorizes that desire is a demand to be recognized, to be considered (9). The admittance of desire makes a priority of one's own needs and wants. While Bhabha emphasizes the unfortunate necessity to define one's self against that of an "other" (44), the act of desire allows for a definition of self which exceeds the claim of "This is what I am not." Desire is a positive assertion, not a negation of identity. For Bhabha, the process of identification takes place in language (51). In fact, progress and self-development can only take place once desire has initiated the motion of cultural identity: "Once more it is the desire for recognition, 'for somewhere and something else,' that takes the experience of history beyond the instrumental

hypothesis" (10). Desire catalyzes individual experience and historic progress.

The complete lack of academic recognition for Chopin's novel until the latter half of this century suggests that these obvious and dramatic challenges to nineteenth century ideals of motherhood, wifehood, religion, and culture only recently became acceptable. In the first critical biography written on Kate Chopin, Per Seyersted notes that well into the 1950's Chopin was known only for her talent as a local colorist. Seyersted even claimed that *The Awakening* was banned in Chopin's hometown of St. Louis, and he gives a detailed account of critical attacks on the book in the press.

More recent biographer Emily Toth disagrees with Seyersted on the issue of the banning of Chopin's work. Toth contends that the novel was criticized, but never officially banned. The St. Louis library also maintains that it never deliberately banned the book from its shelves. Nevertheless, *The Awakening* continues even today to redefine common notions of what is female and of what is human.

Other writers have noted the importance of sexuality to Edna's development. Barbara C. Ewell, for instance, notes that the affirmation of sexuality is integral to Chopin's work (104). Ewell traces the mysticism of sexual descriptions in Chopin's fiction to her Catholic upbringing. However, this chapter will

go further and explain why sexuality is of paramount importance to the development of Edna Pontellier's self-awareness.

Bert Bender has published an intriguing article (as well as a book-length study) proposing that *The Awakening* is a result Chopin's quarrel with Darwin. Although Darwin's theory of natural selectivity appealed to Chopin's reason, his opinion that the female role in sexuality was passive troubled her. Bender finds a progression of increasingly sexual women throughout Chopin's fiction, "especially in the case of Edna Pontellier in The *Awakening,* Chopin's women select on the basis of their own sexual desires rather than for the reasons Darwin attributed to women." (462). Thus, Edna Pontellier demonstrates Chopin's theory of sexuality, a challenge to Darwinian thought. Bender quite rightly emphasizes the importance of desire, as an active component of female sexuality, in the development of Edna's character.

Carol P. Christ also emphasizes the importance of sexuality in *The Awakening*. According to Christ, Edna's need for sexual experience coincides with a social quest, "a search for new ways of living in a human community" (31). However, Christ ultimately condemns *The Awakening* for failing to provide its female readers with a "realistic" victory. The character Isma from Assia Djebar's *Ombre Sultane* would be more satisfying to Christ, in that Isma is able to negotiate her own individual desires within the existing culture. Yet Edna Pontellier's uncompromising

affirmation of selfhood and of female desire deserves more praise than condemnation. The strength of *The Awakening's* conclusion is that it places the burden of responsibility and guilt on society, which could not accommodate Edna's needs. Furthermore, Christ's emphasis on the lack of social utility in *The Awakening* ignores the artistic merit of the novel. Realism is, after all, only one of a myriad of artistic possibilities.

Both Seyersted and biographer Emily Toth write about the difficulty Edna endures as an American Protestant, living in French Creole society that she does not fully comprehend. While the tension between these two cultures certainly has a profound effect on Edna's consciousness, perhaps the most essential fact here is that, with respect to gender roles, both cultures place the same demands and expectations on women. Edna struggles between an individuality she is only just beginning to understand, and the restrictions both cultures impose on women. Until this juncture, Edna's summer at Grand Isle, her life could be categorized into stages of daughterhood, wifehood, and motherhood. So Arobin can propose a toast to Edna's father, "drinking the Colonel's health in the cocktail which he composed, on the birthday of the most charming of women - the daughter whom he invented" (94). Mr. Merriman and the other guests can laugh at the wit of this, because by this point Edna has obviously shrugged off the "filial respect," "sisterly kindness" and even

"womanly consideration" that the Colonel values in a daughter and a woman (76).

Mr. Pontellier, as does the Colonel, sees Edna only as a wife, mother, or daughter. Mr. Ponetellier's judgments and interpretations of Edna's behavior are so influenced by his constructions of what it means to him to be a woman that he consistently misconstrues reality. He comes home from his night at the club and, convinced his son is feverish, he reproaches *"his wife* with her inattention, her habitual neglect of the children. If it was not a *mother's* place to look after children, whose on earth was it?" (6, my emphasis). Mr. Pontellier does not talk to or even about Edna; she becomes lost among what prove to be empty terms: wife, and mother. Add to this the reader's realization that the son, Raoul, is disturbed not by fever, but only by Mr. Pontellier's waking him, and it becomes clear that Edna's subsequent cry arises from her inability to fight the unreal. Mr. Pontellier cannot even exactly define what he means by mother; he can only assert that he finds Edna lacking in this area: "It would have been a difficult matter for Mr. Pontellier to define to his own satisfaction or any one else's wherein his wife failed in her duty toward their children. It was something which he felt rather than perceived . . . 11 (8). The social constructions of wife, mother, and daughter restrict Edna's capacity for individuality, and provide her husband with a scapegoat to chastise. Yet the demands of society insist that in

order to reach maturity, Edna must accept gender roles. When Ad6le Ratignolle accuses Edna of childishness (103), she means that Edna doesn't live according to the socio-cultural mores informing gender.

An important part of the cultural restraints that impede Edna's progress towards self-development is religion. By placing Edna in between two different sects of Christianity, Protestantism and Catholicism, Chopin augments the oppressive force of Christianity as a cultural institution. Throughout The Awakening, religion is yet another cultural reality from which Edna is trying to escape. She recalls the Presbyterian service read by her father as being gloomy, and admits that she carried on her religion mostly by force of habit (17). Religion in the novel is not nearly as compelling or even as spiritual as Edna's own sexuality. In fact, the strongest aspect of religion for Edna is its ability to oppress: "A feeling of oppression and drowsiness overcame Edna during the service . . . her one thought was to quit the stifling atmosphere of the church and reach the open air" (38). Inseparable from the memory of her domineering father and for the strong social sanctions against sexuality and desire outside of marriage, religion comes to represent for Edna the antithesis of her own individual will and desires. Edna ultimately exchanges the communal spirituality of the church for the more personal, individual and natural spirituality of sexuality and selfhood.

Thomas Bonner Jr., in his article on "Christianity and Catholicism in the Fiction of Kate Chopin," also identifies the oppressive effect of Christianity on the individual as a primary theme of *The Awakening*. Bonner notes that a paramount concern in Chopin's fiction is "a running tension between the obligations to the self and to the community" (119), a tension evident in Chopin's use of Christianity. As well as examining the Christian themes overtly expressed in Chopin's fiction, Bonner ponders religious issues that Chopin does not mention, such as divorce. Bonner argues that divorce would have been too extreme, too shocking for both Chopin's audience and Edna's community. This conclusion is inconsistent with Edna's character. By the end of the novel, Edna simply does not recognize the kind of social stigmata Bonner describes. To be ostracized by society, Edna does not need to be divorced; having an affair is shocking enough. Edna's rejection of religion is a victory over Christianity, her suicide rejects society as a whole.

As Edna exchanges communal religion for a more personalized, individual spirituality, she becomes increasingly aware of herself as a physical and psychological reality. Initially, however, her experience of her body and her awareness of her feelings propels her into the next stage of selfhood. There is, for example, a significant difference between her first glance at her own arm, when she misses her husband's rings (2), and her later self-examination, when "She looked at her round

arms as she held them straight up and rubbed them one after the other, observing each closely, as if it were something she saw for the first time, the fine, firm quality and texture of her flesh" (38). Edna moves from a feeling of lack and need, to one of abundance and self-satisfaction. This initial awareness of herself as a tangible, substantial, physical reality reflects Edna's progressive self-assertion of herself as an individual. The foundation for Armstrong's theory of politicizing of domestic fiction lies in her contention that for women, the act of writing literally establishes their psychological and economic reality (14). Because women can control what they write, they can offer representations of their own particular reality. Chopin rewrites the modern figure of woman by first focusing on the physical reality of Edna; as Edna discovers her own physical sensuality, Chopin rebuilds our conception of womanhood.

The newfound skill of swimming plays an important role in the development of Edna's physical consciousness. The night she is first able to swim out to sea alone signifies a newly acquired control over her own body: "A feeling of exultation overtook her, as if some power of significant import had been given to her to control the working of her body and soul" (29). This control that she gains over her body equates to stages of growth and development: "that night she was like the little tottering, stumbling, clutching child, who of a sudden realizes its powers, and walks for the first time alone, bodily and with

overconfidence" (29). Swimming represents a physical and spiritual growth for Edna. For the first time, she can use her body for her own recreation and pleasure.

The sea in which she swims is also significant. The sea represents a very individual, spiritual, and sensual space that is Edna's alone. The sea is the only space Edna has that she can personalize. Chopin reminds the reader of the importance of sensuality to Edna's journey of self-development with the repetition of the refrain: "The voice of the sea speaks to the soul. The touch of the sea is sensuous, enfolding the body in its soft, close embrace" (14). This mixture of spirituality and sensual physicality that the sea offers is an important transition for Edna. Swimming in the sea allows Edna the opportunity to meld both mind and body. The sea is also a source of rebirth. Both Sandra Gilbert and Anne Foata compare Edna to the mythical goddess of love, Aphrodite, who was born of the sea. While the comparison of Edna as to a goddess works well, I argue further that the sea is not only a source for Edna's beauty and sensuality, but also an extension of her feelings. Chopin describes the sea as sensual, and allows the sea to physically embrace Edna. The sea in *The Awakening* is a tangible representation of desire: a psychological intersection of both mental and physical awareness.

Edna's first meaningful achievement, learning to swim out to sea alone, leads directly to her ability to embrace desire. In the moments she spends with Robert immediately after her first swim, "No multitude of words could have been more significant than those moments of silence, or more pregnant with the first felt throbbings of desire" (32). She learns to distinguish between her own desires and those of others, allowing her to establish new boundaries between herself and her husband. Mr. Pontellier asks her to return inside, and Edna realizes that "Another time she would have gone in at his request. She would, through habit, have yielded to his desire" (33). The language Chopin uses here is significant. Edna not only can now distinguish between her own desire and her husband's, she also asserts her own desire above that of her husband. For the first time, she demands individual recognition.

Edna not only learns through desire to control her own life, but she begins to exert control over others as well. After she refuses her husband's request to return inside, an interesting transformation takes place within the dynamics of their relationship. Edna not only refuses, but she issues Leonce a command of her own: "I don't wish to go in, and I don't intend to. Don't speak to me like that again; I shall not answer you" (34). Both the recognition and expression of Edna's desire gives her the ability to assert herself. Edna's desire becomes the catalyst for the self-assertion she practices throughout the rest

of the novel; "In short, Mrs. Pontellier was beginning to realize her position in the world as a human being, and to recognize her relations as an individual to the world within and about her"(14). The process through which Edna discovers her own desires occurs simultaneously with the discovery of herself as an individual.

If desire can be thought of as evidence of fusion between the mind and the body, between the spiritual and the physical, then the affirmation of desire is a necessary step for Edna because of the duality she previously experienced within herself. Edna had always thought of herself as two separate selves: "At a very early period she had apprehended instinctively the dual life - that outward existence which conforms, the inward life which questions" (14). As Edna experiences desire and progresses through her process of self-discovery, "she was becoming herself and daily casting aside that fictitious self which we assume like a garment with which to appear before the world" (62). The theme of a split self, and an ever-evolving self, recurs throughout the novel. After Edna learns to swim, "She could only realize that she herself - her present self - was in some way different from the other self" (43). Precisely because the experience of desire has the dynamic quality of fusing the disparate parts of herself into a whole, Edna gradually evolves into a unique and coherent Lndividual.

In his attempt to form a coherent theory of race and modernity, Homi Bhabha attacks the notion that the split self is part of a process towards freedom.' For Bhabha, the wholeness of the self is necessary for any new historical subject to enter the modern world. Bhabha questions the belief that the split self, the structure of duality, is the necessary state of being (217). Instead. Bhabha attempts "to establish a *sign of the present,* of modernity, that is not that 'now' of transparent immediacy, and to found a form social individuation where commonality is *not predicated on a transcendent becoming*. . ." (241). Edna then, in arriving at her 'present self, a self full of desire and able to fuse mind and body, comes close to fulfilling Bhabha's definition of the "new historical subject."

Yet before Edna arrives at this achievement of wholeness, before she becomes the individual presence who has repeated the process of becoming, she must first learn to leave behind the culture and community that causes conflict within herself. Going out on Tuesdays, smashing her wedding ring, and having an affair with Alcee Arobin are important acts of rebellion for Edna. However, her boldest and most symbolic gesture of defiance is her move to the pigeon-house. The move away from family, particularly from her husband, allows Edna to establish herself as an individual. Edna tells Mlle. Reisz, "I know I shall like it, like the feeling of freedom and independence" (86). The pigeon-house gives Edna the space to reconstruct life on her own

terms, unencumbered by social convention. The result is "a feeling of having descended the social scale, with a corresponding sense of having risen in the spiritual" (101). In fact, every step Edna takes "towards relieving herself of obligations" adds "to her strength and expansion as an individual" (101). In the pigeon-house, Edna attempts to recreate the sense of wholeness she felt while swimming in the sea, a space in which she can be alone. The distance between self and community provides Edna with both the perspective and the freedom she needs to achieve selfhood.

With the move into the pigeon-house, Edna makes the statement that the values that govern the rest of her community no longer apply to her. She moves beyond the need for defiance and rebellion, because she simply refuses to recognize the social standards of her time. She laughs and calls Robert foolish when he confesses his dream of marrying her, because she no longer accepts the role of wife at all. She scolds,

> I am no longer one of Mr. Pontellier's possessions to dispose of or not. I give myself where I choose. If he were to say, 'Here, Robert, take her and be happy; she is yours,, I should laugh at you both (116).

Edna becomes adamant about constructing a life for herself as an individual, a life that is not bound by the roles of 'wife,' 'mother,' and 'daughter.' She confesses to Dr. Mandelet, "I'm not

going to be forced into doing things. I don't want to go abroad. I want to be let alone" (119). Later, she emphasizes her need to live life on her own terms, and alone: "But I don't want anything but my own way. That is wanting a good deal, of course, when you have to trample upon the lives, the hearts, the prejudices of others. . ." (120). What Adele Ratignolle and others would call "childishness," is for Edna freedom and selfhood. At the end of *The Awakening,* Edna exists as an individual who knows her own desires. What remains is for the community to accept her on her terms, an event that Edna realizes can never happen.

The end of *The Awakening* can be troubling, particularly as in committing suicide Edna abandons her children. Contemporary readers might be forgiving of Edna's abandonment of husband, yet to leave her children is still an unforgivable crime. Per Seyersted was the first critic to call Edna "selfish" in her insistence on an independent existence (149). Otis Wheeler, comparing Edna's story to the philosophy of Whitman and Emerson, also argues that Edna's quest for individual existence goes too far. However, as Joan Zlotnick observes, Chopin creates Edna in order to question "the soundness of society's formula for the happiness of all women: marriage and motherhood" (5). Like Zlotnick, I find the persistent negative attitude toward the book puzzling, because as Edna swims out to sea that final time, she is motivated by thoughts of her children. Edna throughout the story was always an excellent mother; she simply wasn't the

doting kind of mother represented by Madame Ratignolle. The night of her death, Edna "understood now clearly what she had meant long ago when she said to Adele Ratignolle that she would give up the unessential, but she would never sacrifice herself for her children" (123). Edna can thus escape the role of 'motherhood," but even as an individual she knows that she cannot subject her children to life in the pigeon-house, and the consequences of such a life in the community.

Edna ultimately realizes that she cannot bring the space of the sea into real existence. Knowing that she cannot return to the dual existence, that she is not willing to sacrifice the essential fusion between mind and body, Edna returns to the only place that has consistently afforded her wholeness. Zlotnick also comments on the significance of the sea: "Edna dies because she cannot reconcile the demands of body and soul . . . As she approaches death, Edna experiences what life has withheld from her: concurrent physical and spiritual satisfaction in the embrace of the sea" (4). Edna's apparent suicide is a victory rather than a defeat, an ultimate protest against a culture that cannot adequately accommodate her needs.

As Edna swims out to sea, she also moves beyond the experience of desire. She comes to the realization that

> There was no one thing in the world that she desired. There was no human being whom she wanted near her except Robert; and she even realized that the day

> would come when he, too, and the thought of him, would melt out of her existence . . . (123).

Edna no longer needs the transitional state of desire, as she has already arrived at a conscious and simultaneous awareness of both her physical and mental self. Yet Edna also misses desire as a motivating force in her life, and her final moments return her to early objects of her desire: the cavalry officer, and the sensuous environment of Kentucky in the summer (125). What remains to be seen is whether or not this new definition of woman can function and exist within her culture, or if in casting aside the shackles imposed on her by culture, community and society must also necessarily be left behind.

Chapter 2: Isma

If *The Awakening* leaves Edna Pontellier having successfully achieved a sense of selfhood and of female identity without the support of culture or community, then Assia Djebar's Isma, from *Ombre Sultane,* can be seen as a progression of Edna's story. Like Edna, Isma experiences an awakening of body consciousness, leading to an understanding of individual selfhood and, consequently, a rebellion against culture and community. However, after Isma discovers that the initial sparks of rebellion do not bring fulfillment, she returns home and creates a space for herself within her traditional community. Isma's situation also differs from Edna's in that Isma lives between two patriarchal cultures, French and Algerian. This cultural duality gives her the perspective she needs to identify the patriarchal control that exists in both the West and the East.

Ombre Sultane is the second novel in Djebar's "Algerian Quartet," a project that attempts to reconstruct the history of women in Algerian, from the French takeover of Algiers to the present day life of peasant women. In *Ombre Sultane,* Djebar explores the history of the harem and the necessity for sisterly solidarity. Isma, the ex-wife, and Hajila, the stepmother, become the reconstructed harem for a modern world.

Until recently, most criticism on Djebar has been written about the first novel in her quartet, *Fantasia, Algerian Calvacade*. The few articles written about *Ombre Sultane* tend to focus on Isma, and her failure to save Hajila from a life of oppression and trauma. David Kelly, for example, blames Isma for the truamas Hajila endures. However, this position ignores both Isma's concern and care for her daughter, Meriem, as well as her own struggles for an independent life. Isma ultimately does realize her complicity in Hajila's continued oppression, and takes action toward liberating her.

The complexity of Isma's situation exceeds the parameters of the gender versus culture dichotomy. Indeed, it is a mistake to label Isma and Hajila as entirely representative of the modern or the traditional woman, as both David Kelly and Clarissa Zimra do. The distinction between the influence of the French culture and those of the Algerian culture are not so easily made in the twentieth century, and Isma and Hajila both exist simultaneously in dual worlds. Arab literature critic Valerie Orlando observes that "Djebar formulates a third space of dialogue and negotiation between French and Algerian worlds. In such a space, polar opposition is erased, as well as any central protagonist or discourse', (Orlando 42). So Isma must not only create an acceptable space between both cultures, she must also contend

with the factor of her sex and gender identity. Yet Isma emerges from these layers of conflicting realities with a strong sense of identity. Of our three women, Isma most successfully achieves a mature sense of identity. She merges her sex and gender identity favorably with her cultural roots, as she moves between dual cultures.

Isma's need to separate, to move away from her cultural/familial roots, simultaneously occurs with an awakening sense of her physical self, her dawning sense of sensuality and sexual initiation. Thus, Isma's story begins with body consciousness: "tantot jambes mues et genoux A demi d6couverts, le buste serro, je me sais mince, jaillissante hors la ceinture de cuir. . ." (19). (Sometimes, legs are bare and knees are half exposed, my breasts are tightly covered, I know I am slim, I am conscious of my narrow waist emphasized by a leather belt.....) Isma's awareness of her physical presence and control over her body and its movements rapidly becomes the central focus of her life. She achieves a singular ability to concentrate on her body moment by moment: "Mon buste penche, l'une de mes épaules dérive, l'un des mes bras tend ses muscles. Avec un acharnement attentif, improviser des postures éphémères, meurtrir mes jointures; je réimagine le monde à travers mes cils" (32). (I lean forward, one of my shoulders free, one of my arms tensed. I concentrate doggedly on each momentary posture I must adopt, making my limbs relax; I recreate the world behind my eyelashes.)

The heart of Isma's sense of self and identity lies in her body consciousness, her awareness of her own physical self.

The importance of Isma's awareness of her body as the root of her self-actualization cannot be overemphasized, as it indicates a part of herself that must be recovered from her socio-cultural world. Hafid Gaifiti notes that "in Arab-Muslim cultures, the body, from birth, is textually given" (813). Gafaiti refers to the practice of writing scriptures in ink in the baptismal water, so children are almost literally baptised with the text of the *Koran*. Scriptures also dictate body decorum; they describe ideals of female beauty and instruct as to the proper rituals surrounding the body. The Islamic body belongs not to the individual, but to the community: "In the Muslim universe there is no purely sexual field; there is only a regulated sexual field, coded and systemized according to the options and priorities of Islam as a culture and a strategy for civilization" (Sabbahu 65). Limb by limb, Isma attempts to decode the collective Islamic body; or rather, she re-codes it to fit the individual woman. Isma's physical and sensual awakening restores her body to herself and allows her to construct herself as something outside the collective patriarchal community.

If her body belongs to her culture, then Isma not only does not possess her own body, she has no place in her culture, either. Valerie Export, in her article defining body theories, writes, "Culture, as we know it today, is not the arena of the

woman; she is exiled from it by definition" (14). According to Export, women are excluded from culture because it contributes to the mutilation and degradation of female bodies. Isma senses this relationship between the lack of physical and cultural entitlement: "je ne possède plus ni viole ni visage" (20). (I no longer possess either a face or a veil.) Isma makes little distinction between her body and the veil, her cultural face. Yet her singular awareness of her body allows her to place herself back into her culture: "In order to detect the difference between itself and the outside world, the body must first detect itself" (Export 16). Although she begins the process in exile, Isma's newly awakened body consciousness can be seen as the first step toward achieving autonomous identity within her culture.

Along with an awakened consciousness of her own physical person, Isma's temporary abandonment of home and culture coincides with her experience of desire. Desire lies at the root of her memory of her experience abroad. Succinctly stating that she visited a succession of places (30), she waxes significantly more eloquent in her description of her own sensuality and encounters with her husband:

> Jallonge les jambes; volupté d'attendre le plaisir après le plaisir, de continuer d'en avoir les membres rompus, les articulations assouplies. Mes yeux s'accrochent à l'embrasure de la porte bleu vif, en suivent le contour quadrangulaire, tandis que mes

> seins s'étalent. Mes coudes posés à plat découvrent leur saignée. La porte se rabat de nouveau; la distance entre mon corps couché et 1'homme debout se dissout. Éclair avant la peétrification de l'attente (31).
>
> (I stretch my legs, in voluptuous anticipation of pleasure after pleasure, of exhausted limbs and compliant coupling. I lie back, my elbows straight at my sides, offering up my exposed breasts, keeping my eyes fixed on the bright blue-painted door-frame, tracing its rectangle. The door swings back again; the space between where my body lies and he stands dissolves. In a flash, I freeze in anticipation.)

Beyond the mental state of body consciousness, desire indicates an agency of the body, and Isma's willingness to make active use of and respond to her physical self. This transition from consciousness to making active use of her sensuality signals the shift from physical to mental awareness.

The move from body consciousness to an active, indulgent pleasure in her own physicality almost removes Isma from Islamic discourse altogether. The very act of desiring contradicts Islamic views on femininity. Fatma Sabbahu describes Muslim views toward women: "the omnisexual woman, moved by the animal force that she has between her legs, can hardly be a good believer, a pious Muslim. . ."(Sabbahu 32). Later, as she moves further along

the process of achieving individual selfhood, Isma makes the transgression of identifying her body with her religion: "Moi, si je devais prier, ce serait dans cette nudité du bain, corps inondé, exsudant" (158). (As for me, if I were to pray, it would be in the nakedness of the bath, with my body soaking and sweaty.) She liberates her body, and subsequently herself, from prescribed codes of femininity and piety.

Isma's desire subverts traditional concepts of female subjectivity. Djebar writes Isma with an awareness of modern colonial theories of orientalism: "Authors like Djebar view the identity of maghrebian women from this perspective of exile. The identity of these women has for centuries been hindered. . . colonial Orientalizing notions of exoticism. . ."(Orlando 8). Isma becomes the subject of herself, as opposed to the object of another. Isma's self-subjectivity subverts the common stereotype of man as the active agent and woman as the object of his desire. Isma's desire provides the foundation for a new sense of identity:

> As we deconstruct rigid, single-subject Western identity, we destabalize old paradigms and subsequently reinscribe new ones for a new unity of women . . . It is here in the space of destructured desire, that feminine subjects are placed at a new beginning, where agency is possible (Orlando 6).

So the scene of Isma's experience of desire, a self-imposed exile in Paris, becomes especially significant: she must remove herself from her home village in order to allow her physical self not only to emerge, but also to act.

However, the use of her body as a site of identification proves as transitory as her life abroad in Paris. Isma begins to use her body for the momentary thrill of discovering herself again: "Tandis qu'au-dhors la poitrine est noyée sous la grosse laine, que les chevilles et les poignets sont soustraits à la vue par le cuir de la botte et du gant, tout, dans la chambre, reprend autonomie" (45). (While outdoors, I cover my breast in coarse wool, and hide ankles and wrists from view in the leather of boot or glove, in the room, everything recovers.) She dresses to undress, to experience that moment of self-discovery once more: "je prendais violes de religieuse s'il le fallait, et là, en face, d'un coup, ils glisseraient!" (4S). (I would become a nun if need be and take the veil, and then let it suddenly slip off my face!) After the initial thrill of self-discovery, Isma needs something more substantial in which to ground herself. Her body is but the beginning.

Isma's moment of rebellion comes when she first comprehends her own father's participation in the patriarchal culture. During her adolescence, Isma realizes that far from being the wise, Loving father she was used to believing in, her father is little more than a dictator: "je découvrais difficilment cette

vérité: un père qui ne se présente au mieux qu'en organisateur de précoces funérailles" (148). (With difficulty, I discovered this truth: a father who was at best only the organizer of premature funerals.) This startling realization reveals to Isma her own role of daughter devoid of individuality and autonomy. Her father's anger at her for playing on the swing reduces her from an individual with a sense of discovery, entitlement, and agency, to an actor with a prescribed role: "Sa fille montrait ses jambes. Pas moi, il ne s'agissait pas de moi, mais d'une ombre quassiment obscène(148). (His daughter showed her legs. Not me, he wasn't dealing with me, but with an almost obscene shadow.) While Isma's initial reaction is to flee into exile, a need to challenge patriarchy quickly supersedes her flight reaction: "Chaque nuit, j'affine la connaissance de l'autre par degrés imperceptibles. . .Mes caresses deviennent gestes d'arpenteur"(57). (Every night, by imperceptible degrees, I refine my knowledge of the other. My caresses have the gestures of a

surveyor.) Coinciding with her own corporeal initiation, Isma uses her newfound desire to know, or in her words, to possess "l'autre," thus completing the first step of her rebellion against culture.

Yet in leaving behind the patriarchal world she has known, Isma ignores the importance of the female community that has

always existed, albeit silent and hidden, within her culture and community. She feels isolated from this community, and so she surrounds herself with the mental images of other women even as she lies in bed with her husband: "Ainsi, dans notre chambre, je parle longuement à 1'époux de ses soeurs. Ces évocations font émerger leur présence . . . J'ai beau supprimer les images de ses sœurs, sa famille persiste en moi" (58). (So, in our room, I talk at length to my husband of his sisters. They emerge from my evocations . . . In vain do I repress the images of his sisters, his family persists in me.) Just as Edna Pontellier, at the moment of her ultimate isolation, as she swims to her death, is surrounded by the memory of her family and children, so Isma achieves a sense of self. The female community she lived in was apparent before Isma's departure from Algeria: "Je vécus par la suite hors du harem: mon père veuf me mit en pension, mais le me sentais reliée à ces séquestrées indéfectiblement" (87). (I lived subsequently outside the harem: my father sent me to boarding school, but I felt inalterably linked to these prisoners.) The strength of Isma's isolation ultimately drives her to return home and to rejoin her community of women.

Isma realizes that the individual cannot achieve the self-actualization she seeks alone. Because communities, and not individuals, comprise culture, communities are also needed to resolve cultural conflicts. Her daughter's plea for her to return home places Isma back within the boundaries of a female

community: "J'avais voulu m'exclure pour rompre avec le passé. . .Meriem m'avait écrit. J'accourais; je nepouvais me libérer seule" (90). (I intentionally excluded myself in order to break with the past . . . Meriem had written to me. I hurried back; I could not free myself alone.) Isma's return to her native village may at first be interpreted as a failure to achieve independent identity, and she initially interprets it so: "Je m'abrite derrièe le mutisme de tant d'annonymes ensevelies. Es-ce pour pallier l'échec de mon ancien défi?" (88). (I shelter behind the silence of so many anonymous women who remain hidden. Is it to alleviate the failure of my old defiance?) Yet Isma returns home with a sense of entitlement and control over not only her destiny, but the lives of other women around her as well. She begins her reconstructed life back home with two significant actions: she embraces her aunt, and she declares her intent to reclaim her daughter (89). In embracing her aunt, she shows an acceptance of and gratitude towards the community of traditional women who raised her; in making the decision to take back her daughter, Isma re-enters this community with the same sense of agency, commitment, and identity she had acquired while in exile.

Djebar merges Isma and Hajila in order to focus exclusively on the lives of women. Isma explains, "une violence me saisit de mélanger ma vie à signaler le carreflour vers lequel, aveuglées, nous patinons, bras tendus l'une vers l'autre?" (85). (I was seized by a violent desire to merge my life with that of another

woman. Does the body of every male serve to signal the crossroads towards which we women spin, blindfold, out of control, holding out our hands towards each other?) Isma conjures up Hajila in order to create a connection between two women. The move is a successful one:

> Tour &à tour, sur la scène du monde qui nous est refusée, dans 1'espace qui nous est interdit . . . Tour à tour, toi et moi, fantômes et reflets pour chacune, nous devenons la sultane et sa suivante, la suivante et sa sultane! Les hommes n'existent plus, ou plutôt si, ils piétinent, ils encombrent (168). (Taking turns on the world stage that is denied us, in the space that is forbidden . . . taking turns, you and I, ghost and mirror-image, we become the sultan's bride and her attendant, the attendant and her mistress! Men no longer exist, or rather if they do, they trample, they obstruct us.)

Isma and Hajila change places, as one woman learns to embrace her cultural heritage, and the other moves towards cultural liberation. Isma realizes this exchange is taking place, as she becomes more transparent and Hajila becomes more tangible: "Plus les mots me devancent, plus mon présent se disperse; et ta forme s'impose" (91). (The more my words proceed me, the more my presence dissolves, and your figure imposes itself.) This movement closes the gap between the two women, moving them closer

towards each other, until they are hardly distinguishable from one another.

There is a sense in which Isma creates Hajila, as if Hajila were not a real woman at all, but rather another aspect of Isma's memory. Throughout the novel, Isma speaks for Hajila; any information we have regarding Hajila comes through Isma's voice. Isma herself suggests this: "C'est toujours moi qui te parle, Hajila. Comme si, en vérité, je te créais" (91). (I always speak to you, Hajila. As if, in truth, I create you.) Isma calls Hajila into existence for the same reasons she calls upon her memory and her childhood. Just as Isma embraces her aunt upon returning to her village, so too must Isma embrace the traditional woman she sees in Hajila and the traditional women of her memory. Isma must return to the site of her culture in order to find the community of sisters she did not have in Paris: "Les sceurs n'existent-elles que dans les prisons - celles que chacune élève autour d'elle. ."(91). (Sisters exist only in prisons - prisons that every woman erects around herself. . .) Isma must first return to the culture that once imprisoned her in order to re-discover the female community she had never appreciated.

Hajila also acts as a site of healing for Isma. Isma describes Hajila as "Toi, ma fille et ma mère, ma consanquine: ma blessure renouvelée" (157). (You, my daughter and my mother, my half-sister: my reopened wound.) Isma must heal the site wounded by her father as well as outward cultural demands. Isma's wound

uncovers the misery not just of herself, but of the women she finds back home. She feels compelled to narrate their stories, as if to expel them: "je ne sias pourquoi les corps couchés des femmes me devancent, obscurcissant mon chemin . . ."(137). I don't know why I carry this wave of sorrow, I don't know why the bodies of these

women precede me, obstructing the road.) Reasserting her place within the female community, and subsequently connecting with Hajila, assists Isma in healing the wound opened in her by her culture, allowing her to return home permanently.

The hammam is instrumental in permitting isma to do this. Because the bath-house represents a certain amount of controlled freedom, its enclosure becomes the inverse of the traditional Islamic woman's imprisonment inside the house. Isma describes the *hammam:*

> Le bruit d'eau supprime les murs, les corps se libèrent sous les marbres mouillés. Chaque nuit, le bain maure, qui sert de dortoir aux ruraux de passage, devient un harem inversé, perméable - comme si, dans la dissolutin des sueurs, des odeurs, des peaux mortes, cette prison liquide devenait lieu de renaissance nocturne. De transfuision. Là s'effectuent les passages de symbole, 1à jaillissent les éclairs de connivence; et leurs frôlements tremblés (158).

> (The sound of the water removes the walls, bodies are liberated under the wet marble. Every night, the bath serves as a dormitory for traveling villagers, and so becomes a harem in reverse, permeable - as if, in the dissolution of sweat, odours and dead skin, this liquid prison became a place of nocturnal rebirth. Of transfusion. There, women communicate by signs, exchange conspirational glances, quiver at a barely perceptible touch.)

In Ombre Sultane, the bath house becomes the space in which Isma and Hajila "encounter themselves contingently," to use Homi Bhabha's phrase (328). The space where women and their respective stories and memories can exist side by side and can be exchanged is more important than literal dialogue itself. Isma perceives the bath house as a refuge: "Hammam, refuge du temps immobilisé. L'idée même d'aire close, et donc de prison, se dissout ou s'émiette" (162). (Hammam, refuge frozen in time. The concept of enclosure, and thus of imprisonment, dissolves or disintegrates.) Because of the literal veiling of the Muslim woman's story, the appropriation of space in the bath house subverts the very assumption that speech is necessary. Words and speech, which have been so often denied the subaltern subject, prove to be unnecessary within the freedom of the Turkish Bath.

As a harem in reverse, the *hammam* in Isma's perception creates a space of collusion between women (160). The communication between Isma and Hajila takes place through the exchange of physical gestures of goodwill. The two women wash each other's back, run water over each other's shoulders and hair, and Isma offers Hajila the key to the apartment. This exploration of physical, pleasurable space on each other's body marks a new appropriation of bodily space for Isma and Hajila. Sensual discourse for the Islamic woman has "at the outset reduced the female body to an atrophied genital apparatus," where the body is "diminished, where sex, stripped of intellectual and affective elements, is reduced to only the genital" (Sabbahu 64). In the *hammam,* Isma and Hajila experience bodies, both their own and each other's, as liberated from mere genital objectification.

Isma and Hajila emerge from the *hammam* together in complicity, much like the memory of Isma and her aunt in Isma's childhood (160). The connection between the two women allows Djebar to focus on the participation of women in Islamic culture. Yet as a result, Isma discovers that women also engage in the reproduction of patriarchy. Isma includes herself in this discovery. Regarding her relationship to Hajila, she realizes: "Certes, le t'entravais, toi, innocents, depuis que ta mère était devenue mon alliée ou ma complice selon la Tradition" (10). (Indeed, I enslaved you, an innocent, from the day when according to Tradition your mother became my ally or my accomplice.) Isma

perceives a collusion of mothers against their daugthers: "La peur s'entreient leurs fillettes pas encore pubères de leur angoisse insidieuse. Mère et fille, ô harem renouvelé!" (155). (They infuse their daughters before puberty with their own fears and insidious anguish. Mother and daughter, 0, harem restored!) Isma recognizes this transmission of mother/daughter fear to generations of sons, as well:

> Dès 1'enfance, ils apprennent à déceler la brèche de nos hésitations, la défaillance qui, en un éclair, nous dresse les unes contre les autres, défiantes, vociférantes. Ils regardent enfants, pou s'en repaître adultes. Pour creuser ensuite la déchirure entre nous (156).
>
> (From infancy, men learn to detect the breach of our hesitations, the moment of weakness which, in a flash, pits women against each other, defiant and screaming. They observe us as children in order to prey upon us as adults. Eventually to widen the gap between us.)

Both as a mother and in her identification as Touma's ally, Isma plays a role in this generational collusion of women against their sex.

Katherine Grecki, in her article on violence and writing in Djebar's Algerian Quartet, concludes that Isma fails Hajila by not watching over her; like Touma, Isma perpetuates the enmity among women of the harem, thus failing to complete her own

liberation, despite her apparent modernity (839). Yet paradoxically, Isma's ability to let go of Hajila proves her liberation and modernity. Isma gives Hajila the key so she can help herself, then Isma detaches herself from the situation: "Ainsi je ne te crée plus, je ne t'imagine plus. Simplement, je t'attends" (166). (So I no longer create you, I no longer imagine you. I merely wait for you.) Isma realizes she can no longer speak for Hajila. She admits, "Je ne t'invente ni te poursuis. A peine si je témogne; je me dresse" (167). (I neither invent you nor pursue you. I can hardly testify; I stand in your presence.) Isma's construction of Hajila has been an intrusion, and Isma realizes her own mistake in participating in the process of objectifying Hajila. Instead of construing a story that does not exist, Isma permits Hajila herself to move into visibility.

It is also true that Isma no longer needs Hajila. Instead, she can form her own roots: "Cette illusion ne me ramenait-elle pas à mon origine - la cité rousse là-bas d'où ma mère ne sortit jamais? Je ne me fixerai pas ailleurs" (165). (Wasn't this illusion leading me back to my origins - that distant red-brown city my mother never left? I will settle nowhere else.) The palce where her mother never left and her daughter was born, Isma's home village draws her back. However, far from failing to achieve liberation, Isma returns to her home village as a divorced woman of experience who has reclaimed her daughter. Isma re-appropriates space still haunted by the past: "Reprendre

possession de l'espace, là où les rires du passé ne cessent de ruisseler" (166). (To take possession of the space, there where the laughter of the past still echoes.) Ultimately, Isma returns home ready to embrace Islam only on her own terms: "A ma manière, me revoiler. . ." (166). (To wear the veil again, in my own fashion . . .) Isma's sense of self and identity can no longer be destroyed by that which she does not endorse.

Isma, like Edna Pontellier, achieves a degree of self-awareness and wholeness. In the Turkish Bath, Isma is reminiscent of Edna as she swims towards the horizon surrounded by only her memories: "Je m'imagine tout à la fois enfant et vieillarde. Au début et au terme" (159). (I imagine myself first as a child and in my old age. The beginning and the end.) Yet Isma's life expands beyond the boundaries and impediments of Edna's. Isma surrounds herself not just with memories and imaginings, but with a tangible community of women. Isma also forges a space for herself, *as herself,* within her culture and community. Yet the novel leaves us with the suggestion that there is more beyond Isma. As the figure of Isma becomes more shadowy through the course of the novel, Hajila's figure gains tangibility, and Isma is prepared to depart into the distance of her village in order to let Hajila's story emerge.

Chapter 3: Hajila

In her preface to "Blood Does Not Dry on the Tongue," Assia Djebar writes, "What have I been looking for, between two spaces, between Algeria and France, or only in Algeria, since it is more and more divided between desire and death?" (22). The characters Isma and Hajila together represent just such a division between two nationalities and between the two modes of living. If Isma, rebellious and desirous, provides a positive model of the Algerian woman creating a space for herself within her community, then Hajila represents the woman who falls through the gap. Unlike Isma's sensuous experience of sexuality, Hajila's sexual experience is characterized by violence and rape. Despite this trauma, Hajila still comes to an understanding of her own body. In rediscovering this physical side of herself, Hajila also manages to escape from home and family and to reconnect to the community. However, unlike those of Edna Pontellier and Isma, Hajila's story stops short, before the reader gains clear insight into her ability to act as a positive agent in her own life. Hajila remains both a warning and a question mark, in multiple ways the untold and unknown story of the Algerian woman.

One significant challenge to understanding Hajila's story is the use of Hajila's voice. Hajila virtually never speaks for

herself; instead, Isma narrates Hajila's story. The consistent repetition of "you" in place of Isma's more authoritative "I" serves as a reminder that Hajila's story is an interpretation. The use of the second person "you" acts as another form of Hajila's veil, representing the inevitable distance between Hajila and the reader. Hafid Gaifiti, in her article on violence and veils in Djebar's work, also notes the peculiar use of "You" in relation to Hajila. Gafaiti writes, "The 'I' is written from the point of view of a woman in search of herself in a society which establishes a common predicament for all women" (814). Isma's use of the personal 'I' individuates her from the average Algerian woman. Hajila's 'you' keeps her distanced, a shadowy part of community and society.

Yet understanding Hajila is vital to understanding both Isma's and Edna Pontellier's ability to achieve a sense of self and of individuation. In *The Location of Culture,* Homi Bhabha attempts to understand the ambiguities and difficulties of establishing a firm sense of identity, especially in these 'post'-colonial times. Bhabha writes, "In the postcolonial text, the problem of identity returns as a persistent questioning of the frame, the space of representation where the image - missing person, invisible eye, oriental stereotype - is confronted with its difference, its other" (46). The juxtaposition of Isma and Hajila can be seen as a confrontation of two opposites, yet two opposites somehow necessary for either one to form a positive

sense of identification. Bhabha explains this apparent contradiction as "the very place of identification, caught in the tension of demand and desire, is a space of splitting" (44). Hajila may be necessary to complete the process of Isma's self-identification, yet she is ultimately more than a shadow, and exists as a distinct individual in her own right.

Of course, Djebar alludes to the idea of a shadow, or sister, both in the title *Ombre Sultane* and within the text itself. The title of the English translation, *A Sister to Scheherazade*, emphasizes the importance of Dinarzade from the classic tale *Arabian Nights*. Scheherazade, equivalent to Isma from Djebar's novel, saves both her own life and the lives of the other women in the kingdom through her art of storytelling, with the one significant difference that Isma, unlike Scheherazade, is not a bride. By telling complex, interconnected, suspenseful, and never-ending tales to the Sultan, Scheherazade assures her salvation. However, she relies on Dinarazade to wake her before dawn in order to tell her story. Throughout the novel, Isma claims that Scheherazade and her sister are interchangeable characters: "Laquelle des deux, ombre, devient sultane, laquelle, sultane des aubes, se dissipe en ombre d'avant midi?" (9). (Which of the two, a shadow, will become the sultan's bride, which, the bride of the dawn, will dissolve into a shadow before noon?) Isma and Hajila take turns playing the roles of Scheherazade and Dinarzade. Isma narrates Hajila's story, yet

she also admits, "Aujord'hui, pour secourir une concubine, je m'imagine sous le lit; éveilleuse et solitaire. , ." (113). (Today, in order to help a concubine, I imagine myself under the bed, solitary awakener.) The twist in Djebar's story lies in the object of Scheherzade's story-telling; with the use of Isma's "you" she indicates that she narrates her tales not to a sultan, but to Hajila, her surrogate sister. Thus Hajila becomes the object of, but not necessarily a subject in, Isma's narration. This narrative distance, combined with Hajila's own personal alienation from culture. family, and self, makes the reconstruction of her identity particularly difficult.

Haila begins the novel alienated from the very religion and family that supposedly offers her protection and nurturance. In Hajila's first scene, she struggles to articulate herself within a religion that does not encompass her. As Isma exclaims, "Tu cherches le nom d'un saint fraternal . . . appels des aïeules ivoqant des saints morts, tou cadavres de mâles!" (16). (You search for the name of a friendly saint. . . female ancestors calling on dead saints, all male corpses!) Elsewhere Hajila's religious alienation is also readily apparent. She recites her prayers mechanically and in a melancholic state (15-16). Perhaps the most obvious evidence of religious exclusion and alienation comes after the rape scene. Isma observes, "Tu as respects le rituel des ablutions, toi, 1'exclue de toute prière"

(67). (You've respected the ritual ablutions, and yet you're excluded from all prayer.) The religious and familial duty that defines her role in matrimony does not allow her the relief of worship. The irony inherent in the act of intercourse for the Muslim wife is that it is both a duty and a pollutant. In her study of Muslim male-female relations, Moroccan writer Fatima Mernissi writes, "During coitus, the male is actually embracing a woman, symbol of unreason and disorder, anti-divine force of nature and disciple of the devil . . . During intercourse, the man is reminded that he is not in Allah's territory" (114). Hajila, searching for sanctuary in her religious teachings, finds only complex ironies and a denial of her human potential.

Both marriage and language further alienate Hajila. By marrying her husband, she becomes isolated within her tiny apartment and distanced from her family, particularly from her sister, Kenza. As her family tries to telephone her, Hajila's response is further seclusion: "Tu ne sais pas, tu ne veux pas!" (24). (You don't know what's happening; you don't want to know!) Both the modernity of the new apartment and the aggressiveness of her mother drive her into isolation. The fact that her husband and his children speak French, which she cannot understand (18), closes off the most obvious avenues for communication and companionship. Her new husband is virtually a stranger, with whom she communicates little. Hajila is cloistered, denied meaningful human interaction on a religious, linguistic, and social level.

More disturbingly, Hajila becomes increasingly estranged from herself. This division begins with physical concerns. Hajila's name means "little quail;" in her mind, she sees herself as a dirty, white, shivering bird (16). Hajila's poor body image also takes the form of distance between her inner and outer self. As she looks at herself, the 'you' used to signify Hajila's experience is enclosed by quotes, as if to suggest these body parts do not really belong to her at all: "Main sur le robinet de cuivre: <<ta>> main. Front sur un bras nu tendu: <<ton>> front, <<ton>> bras" (16). (A hand lies on the brass faucet: "your" hand. A forehead rests against a tensed arm: 'your" forehead, "your" arm.) Placing the possessive pronouns in quotes likens them to the masculine pronouns used in quotes a paragraph before; we are introduced to Hajila's husband also at a distance, as "The Man" or "He." Hajila does not think of her body as belonging to herself; she belongs to her husband.

Because she sees her body as belonging to someone else, Hajila moves her body uncomfortably, as if she were living with a stranger. Even after her husband leaves for the day, Hajila is not comfortable with herself: "Tu palpes tes traits, r-es pommettes saillantes, tes yeux enfoncés, ton front un peu bombé qui atténue ton regard - quel regard de quelle inconnue?" (17). (You feel your face, your prominent cheekbones, your deep-set eyes, your slightly bulging brow that eases your gaze - what gaze of what stranger?) Djebar gives us the image of a woman groping

awkwardly, blindly: "Ta main a esquissé un geste d'avenugle" (17). (You move your hand with the gesture of a blind woman.) The foundation of Hajila's self-perception is dissociation and alienation.

The connection between Hajila's inner and outer self is further severed by her violent induction into sexual experience. Hajila's rape is the inverse of what Edna Pontellier and Isma experience through sex. While the latter two women express desire and gain a measure of control over themselves, both physically and mentally, Hajila loses this control. While Hajila tries to defend herself, she also is described as losing control: "Le moment approche où il te faudra plonger. Te fermer, yeux, oreilles, le fond du cœur. Te laisser couler!" (67). (The moment approaches when you will have to dive under. Shut your eyes, ears, the depths of your heart. Let yourself sink!) Hajila's loss of control is further accentuated by her lack of language for describing her experience. The concept of marital rape does not exist in Muslim culture. Hajila is not even sure if she has the right to complain: "Le viol, est-ce le viol? Les gens affirment qu'l est ton époux, la mère dit <<ton maître, ton seigneur>>" (66). (Rape, is this rape? People assert that he is your husband, your mother says 'your master, your lord'.) Hajila experiences the violence of rape, yet socially and culturally speaking nothing significant happens. This split between Hajila's actual experience and the cultural norms articulated in her

society further segregates her from family and community, creating an almost irreconcilable division within herself.

In *Trauma and Recovery,* Judith Lewis Herman describes how an act of violence, such as rape, disrupts a woman's sense of self as well as her ability to relate to the larger community. According to Herman, "traumatized people suffer damage to the basic structures of the self" (56), such as their sense of self-trust, their connection to others, and their faith. Hajila exemplifies this clinical observation; she has a poor sense of self, she has difficulty relating to the larger community, and while she remains faithful to the Islamic religion, she begins to question its teachings. Hajila's poor self-image and poor body image also relate directly to her experience of rape. Herman notes that the loss of bodily control experienced by rape survivors is fundamental to the loss of self (53).

One impediment to the formation of a coherent sense of self is the inability to control one's reality. A significant factor in any violent act is that the perpetrator "names and defines reality" (Herman 8). However, the rape survivor does not just lose her control of reality during the rape. Afterwards, the community's response may also alienate her: "When the victim is already devalued (a woman or a child) she may find that the most traumatic events of her life take place outside the realm of socially validated reality. Her experience becomes unspeakable" (8). This problem is conspicuous in the situation of marital

rape, particularly in a culture that does not recognize such violence as a form of rape. Herman's theory also accounts in part for Hajila's inability to relate to the community. Rape survivors are not socially valorized, as are war heroes. Therefore, they must find their own way back into the community (73).

Hajila's first step in reconnecting to the community is an individual defiance. After the rape, Hajila remembers her mother's life-stories, particularly that her mother, at twelve, was a child-bride (62). The moment of identification that Hajila feels between herself and her mother, both victims and brides, gives her the strength to rebel against her husband. She refuses to sleep with him until she has visited the *hammam,* and she recalls that of her family and friends, "Aucune n'a révélé que, le lendemain, votre senle arme est le défi!" (72). (No woman reveals that, in the morning, your only defense is defiance!) Hajila also learns not to fear her husband: "Ce lendemain, du viol, tu ne le crains plus. . . Sûre de toil' (71). (On this morning after the rape, you're no longer afraid. . .you're sure of yourself.) Hajila's defiance validates her own experience as a survivor. She places herself both within and outside of the community of women. The rape for Hajila is a source both of identification and of alienation. Her newfound defiance allows her to promote her own ideas, and to define herself both with and against her community.

The most significant act of protest Hajila commits is to escape outdoors each afternoon. Her memories of her forays help her to survive the rape: "Faut-il céder? Non, rappelle-toi les nuées; les murs s'ouvrent; arbres et háies glissent. Tu revios l'espace au-dhors où chaque jour tu navigues" (67) . (Must you give in? No, remember the streets, they stretch out in you, under a sun that has dissolved the clouds; the walls open; trees and hedges glide along. You meet again the outdoor space through which you sail.) Walking outdoors each day places Hajila in a larger community and allows her to escape the confinement of home and family. Her walks outdoors recreate the effects of childhood (32), a feeling also experienced by Edna Pontellier in the sea. The childhood state signifies a time when desires, needs, and wants are the chief modes of expression. Walking outside also places Hajila back within a community: "tu dis que tu as une histoire" (49). (You tell yourself that you have a history.) This sense of history gives Hajila not only a past, but also a future. It asserts that she belongs to a tradition, a particular place and time. She is not invisible and unknown. Not only does Hajila walk outdoors each day, she furtherrebels by removing her veil. Isma describes this activity as
contradictory in essence, at once revealing and secretive: "Là, tu te décides avec violence: enlever le voile! Comme si tu voulais disparaïtre. . .ou exploser!" (39). (There, you make a sudden decision: to remove the veil! As if you wanted to disappear . . . or explode!) Clarisse Zimra refers to an

interview in which Djebar discusses her approach to writing about women and veils. According to Zimra, Djebar is most interested in the physical description of veils and the bodies underneath. Zimra quotes, "One can see their bodies, and the problem of the veil does not interest me - it does not yet exist" (824). This relationship between the physical, sexual aspects of the feminine psyche and the veiled woman is reiterated in *Ombre Sultane*. Walking unveiled among strangers allows Hajila to feel naked:

> Tu contemples ton corps dans la glace, 1'espirit incondé des images du dehors de la lumierè du dehors, du jardin-comme-à-la-télévision. Les autres continuant à défiler 1à-bas; tu las ressuscites dans 1éau du miroir pour qu'ils fassent cortège à la femme vraiment nue, à Hajila nouveile qui froidement te dévisage (43)
>
> (You look at your body in the mirror, your mind filled with images of the outdoor light, of the garden as if it were on television. The others continue to walk down below: you conjure them up in the mirror so they can accompany this woman who is truly naked, a new Hajila who coldly stares back at you.)

Hajila begins to associate the freedom and expansiveness of the outdoors with her own body. True nakedness, for Hajila, is not simply unclothing, but exposing herself to society's gaze.

The contradiction between Djebar's above statement and the obvious centrality of the veil in the novel reflects quite

accurately the history of the veil in Algeria. Colonial writer Franz Fanon was the first to note the significance of the veil in this context. He observes:

> There is thus a historic dynamism of the veil that is very concretely perceptible in the development of colonization in Algeria. In the beginning, the veil was a mechanism of resistance . . . The veil was worn because tradition demanded a rigid separation of the sexes, but also because the occupier *was bent on unveiling Algeria* (63).

Rita A. Faulkner has also made the connection between Fanon and veils in Djebar's novels. Faulkner concludes that Djebar finds women imprisoned by physical walls and mental veils (847). Yet this conclusion belies the intricacy of the veil as a site of historical cultural conflict in *Ombre Sultane*. To unveil is to concede to the oppression of the nation; to wear the veil is to submit to the oppression of self and gender.

On a literal level, Hajila's daily walks allow her to escape the physical confinement of the apartment. One of the pivotal assertions Herman makes is the reality of domestic confinement: "Political confinement is generally recognized, while domestic confinement of women and children is often unseen" (74). That Hajila's resistance to the physical force of rape coincides with her struggle against the cultural confinement of women is consistent with Herman's claim that "women are rendered captive

by economic, social, psychological, and legal subordination, as well as physical force" (74). While seemingly small acts in themselves, Hajila's walks represent a significant personal rebellion against social and cultural resistance.

Hajila's final rebellion consists of revealing her predilection for walking about unveiled to her husband. His brutal response, not just in beating her but in threatening to gouge out her eyes, suggests the reciprocal nature of Hajila's transgression. Not only can other people see her; she can return the gaze. The irony inherent in the extremity of the husband's response is apparent in the text: "Un homme ivre a le droit de dériver mais une femme qui va nue, sans que son maîle sache, quel châles Transmetteurs de la Loi révélée, non écrite, lui réserveront-ils?" (97). (A man has a right to become unhinged when he is drunk, but what punishment will the Apostles of the Revealed Law - unwritten - mete out to a woman who goes about naked, without her master's knowledge?) This violent confrontation moves Hajila to take responsibility for her own situation: "Tu formules la révolte: pourquoi avoir reçu lecoup en victime offerte, alors qu'il suffisait de faire un pas de biais?" (98). (You formulate the ideas of rebellion: why did you submit willingly to his blow, when all you had to do was step aside?) This scene is cathartic for Hajila, and ends with the image of her open-eyed and free.

Hajila comes closest to achieving an individual sense of self in the *hammam*. Hajila, as well as Isma, describes the *hammam* as a site of self-discovery:

> S'il ne faut vraiment sortir, vite s'ouvrir par les yeux, le sain, les aisellas! Cheveux dénoués et trempés, le dos étalé sur la dalle de macbre brûlant, ventre sexe et jambes libérés, creuser une grotte et au
>
> fond, tout au fond, parler enfin à soi-même, l'inconnue
>
> (73).
>
> (If you truly can not escape, quickly open yourself up through the eyes, breasts, armpits. To rest one's back on the marble slab, belly, groin and legs liberated, hollowing out a cave where one can speak with oneself at last.)

Inside the *hammam*, Hajila also finds the consolation of a community. She connects with Isma there, as well as identifying with the other women: "Tu n'écoutes plus. Vite dans l'étuve, au millieu des corps usés qui se confortent de l'atmosphère émolliente" (73).(You are no longer listening, quickly into the drying room, among all those worn out bodies, finding comfort in the emollient atmosphere.) The *hammam* allows Hajila to revel in her own sensuality and also to forge new communal connections.

Djebar also describes the *hammam* as an inverted harem (158). The *hammam* acts as a mirror-image of Hajila's apartment: an enclosed, private space, in this case filled with other women escaping the emptiness and isolation Hajila normally feels. That Hajila must live her married life in seclusion is unusual; calling the *hammam* a harem alludes to the Islamic practice of polygamy. While Touma's suspicion of Isma reflects the problematic enmity that often exists between wives, the *hammam* also serves as a reminder of the potential community the harem offers. Women of the harem can act as rivals or as sisters offering relief: "Ainsi la deuxième épouse sourira furtivement à l'apparrition de la troisème, à son tour celle-ci esquissera même apparent retrait à l'arrivée de la quarième" (100). (So the second wife laughs furtively at the apparition of the third, who might make the same appearance of a retreat at the arrival of the fourth.) Djebar uses the connection between Isma and Hajila in order to reconcile conflicts typically associated with the traditional harem.

If Hajila finds a connection to community at the *hammam, it* still remains unclear as to whether she's yet capable of being the subject of her own story. The identification Isma often makes with Hajila suggests that her story is Isma's past. At the same time, the need Isma feels throughout *Ombre Sultane* to "awaken" Hajila is the same need Edna Pontellier has. Each woman must discover the physical expressions of her needs and wants - The ability to feel this desire is the crucial step in the

construction of a sense of self. The recognition of physical desire leads to an ability to assert one's inner self. Hajila finds peace and acceptance of her physical body in the *hammam*, but she never expresses the desire of Edna or Isma.

Afterward

Though individual integrity is essential, it is not enough for a woman to achieve selfhood individually. Each of the three female characters I examine is challenged to carry what she has learned back into her community. Whereas the fully actualized self should be able to function within the community, only Isma

succeeds in doing so. Edna finds herself unable to reconcile the imperative of individual fulfillment with the constraints of motherhood, while the rest of Hajila's story remains untold.

Even across borders, from Algeria to the Southern United States, and across time, from the nineteenth century to the twentieth century, these characters seem to face similar cultural conflicts. Religion, family, tradition, and social constructions of gender all conspire to alienate women from themselves and their communities. Although coming from different cultural, economic, and religious backgrounds, these two novels both represent the same problems inherent in a patriarchal society. The specific strategies utilized by individual women, both successful and unsuccessful, enable us to better understand the barriers that imprison us in our day to day lives.

From Helen of Troy to the veiled women of twentieth century Afghanistan (or any other fundamentalist Islamic country) women have been forced to bear the burden of national pride and to represent cultural perfection. This historical burden means that most women have been lost as individuals. Unlike men, who are valorized for their exploits in battle and their sacrifices in the name of patriotism, women receive no public acknowledgment for what they endure. In writing her Algerian Quartet, Djebar recovers Algerian women's history by affirming the contributions made by women to nation and culture. Examining Djebar's characters as individuals and exploring their struggle to achieve

selfhood sheds light on the problem of recovering women's lives from patriarchal imprisonment.

Fanon and Bhabha's theory of desire applies to women as well as to colonized people and postcolonial subjects. Desire is the necessary link between mind and body that leads to the articulation of the connection between individual, social, and historical aspects of progress. Transcending Armstrong's argument about the political role of domestic fiction, Edna Pontellier epitomizes the importance of individual desire and sexuality. Bhabha's theory of desire can be applied to a variety of female characters in literature, from Shakespeare to Jeanette Winterson. The remaining works of Chopin and Djebar in particular lend themselves to explorations of the dynamics of desire.

In gathering background material for this project, I have relied on a variety of sources, from contemporary literary criticism to clinical theory. Although each of the characters discussed shares essential aspects of her story with comparable characters, the problems faced by individual characters vary markedly from those of other female characters, therefore my selection of critical support varies accordingly. Whereas I rely on Arab feminist critics in both chapters of *Ombre Sultane*, the traumatic aspects of Hajila's experience indicate the importance of including references to the theory of abuse in analyzing her situation. Though the complexity of women's experiences suggests that no single critical paradigm would be sufficient for

explicating both texts, the striking similarities between the imaginative works of Chopin and Djebar suggest a great deal of affinity between apparently different patriarchal structures.

Literature Cited

Accad, Evelyn. "Freedom and the Social Context." *Canadian Women's Studies* 8 (1992). 96-101.

Armstrong, Nancy. *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel*. New York: Oxford UP, 1987.

Bender, Bert. "The Teeth of Desire: *The Awakening* and *The Descent of Man*." *American Literature* 63 (September 1991). 459-473.

Bhabha, Homi K. *The Location of Culture*. London:

Routledge, 1994.

Bonner, Thomas Jr. "Christianity and Catholicism in the Fiction of Kate Chopin." *The Southern Quarterly: A Journal of Arts in the South* 20.2 (Winter 1982). 118-125.

Chopin, Kate. *The Awakening*. (Barbara H. Soloman, ed.) New York: Penguin, 1976.

Christ, Carol P. *Diving Deep and Surfacing: Women Writers on a Spiritual Quest*. Boston: Beacon Press, 1980.

Djebar, Assia. *A Sister to Scheherazade*. Dorothy S. Blair, translator. Portsmouth, N.H.: Heinemann, 1987.

----- "Blood Does Not Dry on the Tongue." *Research in African Literature* 30 (Fall 1999). 18-22.

----- *Ombre Sultane*. Paris: J.C. Lattès, 1987.

Ewell, Barbara C. "Regions of the Spirit: Nature versus Dogma in Chopin's Religious Vision." *Performance for a Lifetime: A Fetschrift Honoring Dorothy Harrell Brown: Essays on Women, Religion, and the Renaissance*. New Orleans: Loyola University, 1997. 102-116.

Export, Valerie, et al. "The Real and its Double: The Body." *Discourse* 11.1 (Fall/Winter 1988/1989.) 5-27.

Fanon, Franz. *A Dying Colonialism*. Haakon Chevalier, translator. New York: Grove Press, Inc., 1965.

Faulkner, Rita A. "Assia Djebar, Franz Fanon, Women,

Veils, and Land." *World Literature Today* 70 (Autumn 1996). 847-855.

Foata, Anne. "Aphrodite Redux: Edna Pontellier's Dilemma in *The Awakening* by Kate Chopin." *The Southern Quarterly* 33.1 (Fall 1994). 27-31.

Gafaiti, Hafid. "The Blood of Writing: Assia Djebar's Unveiling of Women and History." *World Literature Today* 70 (Autumn 1996). 813-822.

Gilbert, Sandra. "The Second Coming of Aphrodite: Kate Chopin's Fantasy of Desire." *Contexts for Criticism* (Donald Keesy, Ed.) California: Mayfield, 1994. 318-334.

Gracki, Katherine. "Writing Violence and the Violence of Writing in Assia Djebar's Algerian Quartet." *World Literature Today* 70 (Autumn 1996). 835-843.

Herman, Judith Lewis. *Trauma and Recovery*. New York: Harper Collins, 1992.

Kelly, David. "Assia Djebar: Parallels and Paradoxes." *World Literature Today* 70 (Autumn 1996). 844-846.

Lanser, Susan Snaider. "Compared to What? Global Feminism, Comparatism, and the Master's Tools." *Borderwork: Feminist Engagements with Comparative Literature* (Margaret Higgonet, Ed). Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1994. 280-300.

Lanzeg, Marnia. "Feminism and Difference: The Perils of

Writing as a Woman on Women in Algeria." *Conflicts in Feminism* (Marianne Hirsch & Evelyn Keller, Ed.) New York: Routledge, 1990.

Mahdi, Muhsin, Ed. *Arabian Nights*. Husain Haddawy, translator. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1990.

Mernissi, Fatima. *Beyond the Veil: Male-Female Dynamics in Modern Muslim Society*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1987.

Ojo-Ade, Femi. "Of Culture, Commitment, and Construction: Reflections on African Literature." *Transition* 53 (1991). 4-24.

Orlando, Valerie. *Nomadic Voices of Exile: Feminine Identity in Francophone Literature of the Maghreb*. Athens: Ohio UP, 1999.

Sabbagh, Suha, Ed. *Arab Women: Between Defiance and Restraint*. New York: Olive Branch Press, 1996.

Sabbahum, Fatma A. *Woman in the Muslim Unconcious*. Mary-Jo Lakeland, translator. New York: Pergun Press, 1984.

Seyersted, Per. *Kate Chopin: A Critical Biography*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1969.

Shay, Jonathan. *Achilles in Vietnam*. New York: Maxwell Macmillan, 1994.

Toth, Emily. *Kate Chopin*. New York: William Marrow and Co., 1990.

Wheeler, Otis B. "The Five Awakenings of Edna Pontellier." *The Southern Review* 11 (1975). 118-128.

Zimra, Clarissa. "Not so Far from the Medina: Assia Djebar Charts Islam's Insupportable Feminist Revolution." *World Literature Today* 70 (Autumn 1996). 823-834.

Zlotnick, Joan. "A Woman's Will: Kate Chopin on Selfhood, Wifehood, and Motherhood." *The Markham Review* 3 (1968). 2-5.